Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Fuels Reduction and Restoration Treatments

The hazardous fuels program strives to reduce the impacts of unwanted wildland fires on communities and natural and cultural resources. Heavy fuels accumulation and altered vegetation composition and structure, in combination with sustained drought, are contributing to increased fire intensity, spread, and resistance to control through many parts of the United States. Fire occurrence records show an increase in the number of large wildland fires over the last two decades. The impacts caused by these fires is further compounded by the growth of communities adjacent to public lands, putting homes and other structures closer to areas where large wildland fires occur. In recent years, these changes have resulted in wildland firefighters spending more time and effort protecting structures.

In response to the risks posed by heavy fuel loads, the NFP established an expanded, intensive, long-term program of hazardous fuels reduction on Federal and adjacent lands. This program emphasizes cooperation and collaboration among Federal agencies; State, local, and Tribal governments; and other stakeholders to achieve the fuels reduction goals and objectives of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan. Fuels reduction and restoration treatments are designed to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildland fire to people, communities, and natural resources.

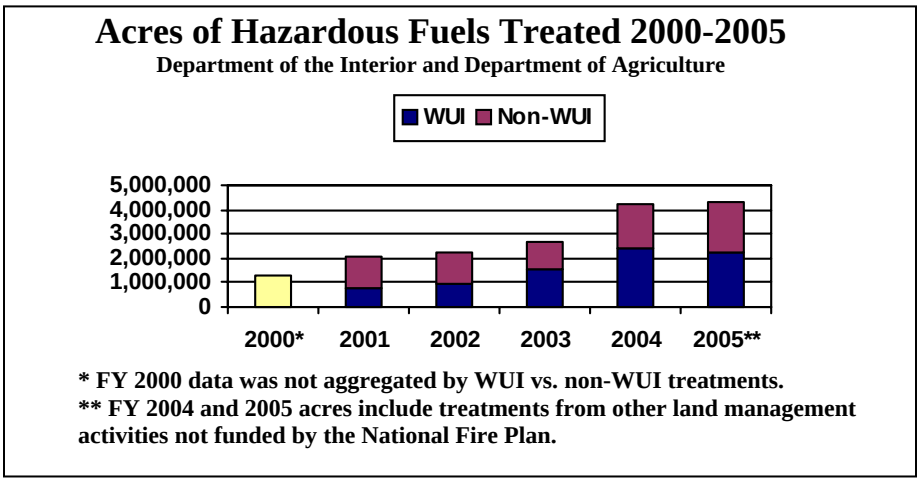
Fuels treatments accomplish these goals by removing or modifying wildland fuels to reduce the potential for severe wildland fire behavior, lessen post-fire damage, limit the spread and proliferation of invasive species and diseases, and maintain and restore healthy, diverse ecosystems. Treatments are accomplished using prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, herbicides, grazing, or combinations of these and other methods.

Hazardous Fuels & Condition Class Improvement Activities, FY 2005

	Hazardous Fuels Appropriations		**Other Appropriations (Condition Class Improvement Activities)**		
Treatment Type	**Prescribed Fire**	**Mechanical & Other**	**Prescribed Fire**	**Mechanical & Other**	**TOTAL**
Forest Service	1,366,988	305,921	114,313	593,164	**2,380,386**
DOI	820,575	448,828	60,977	289,808	**1,620,188**
TOTAL	**2,187,563**	**754,749**	**175,290**	**882,972**	**4,000,574**

Note: Total does not include approximately 251,000 acres treated by Wildland Fire Use on Forest Service Lands or approximately 76,630 acres treated with State Fire Assistance funding.

During FY 2005, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior treated a record of over 2.93 million acres of hazardous fuels on Federal and adjacent lands. Of the total acres treated, 2.44 million were in wildland-urban interface areas. An additional 489,000 acres of wildland fuels were treated on Federal lands through wildland fire use (WFU). Wildland fire use is the management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives including ecosystem maintenance and restoration.

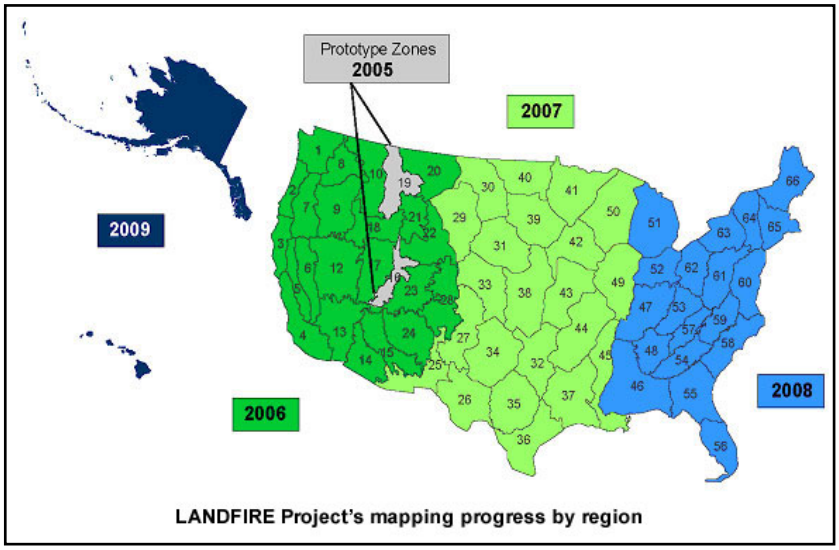


This work was made possible through the implementation of the Healthy Forest Authorities. The activities included in the HFI and HFRA authorities can be summarized as a three-step process of NEPA Planning and Decisions, Analysis and Preparation, and Treatment Planning and Accomplishments (for detailed discussions on *Healthy Forest Authorities* visit www.healthyforests.gov). Using the tools and authorities established under the Healthy Forest Initiative, the Federal Land Management Agencies have significantly reduced the threat of catastrophic wildland fire.

Planning for Fuels Treatments

Project planning continues to be an important aspect of the program of work to prepare for fuels treatments in FY 2006 and into the future. Treatments must address high-priority needs; include local, citizen-driven solutions, and be completed in a manner consistent with land use plans and environmental goals. With an emphasis on wildland-urban interface treatments, planning and consultation for fuels reduction projects involve more cooperators and a higher level of complexity than in the past.

The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture established the multi-agency **LANDFIRE** project to develop a comprehensive package of Geographic Information System (GIS)-based spatial data layers, models, and tools to support analyses for prioritization and planning of fuels treatments at the national and local levels. Two prototype areas are underway in central Utah and northeastern Montana, with nationwide implementation occurring from 2005-2009.



Forest Health Protection

In 2005, USDA Forest Service provided funds for suppression, prevention, and restoration projects on nearly 71,000 acres of Federal lands and nearly 162,000 acres of cooperative lands to control and manage native and non-native invasive insects and diseases on Federal lands. The agency also surveyed, detected, monitored, and evaluated native and non-native forest invasive species including insects and diseases on Federal and tribal forestland.